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POSITION PAPER
No. 7
ALBERTA'S
CULTURAL HERITAGE

[Alberta. Dept. of Culture, Youth & Recreation.

NEW DIRECTIONS POSITION PAPER ON ALBERTA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Alberta's people are representative of many divergent cultural backgrounds, and this fact is recognized by the Government of Alberta. The government recognizes also that "every people has a characteristic culture of its own; and, ultimately, many cultures, evolving together, produce a distinct and new culture".

The Government believes that Alberta should now carefully assess the riches of the cultural wealth of its peoples, and give direction to the full utilization of this human heritage.

Because our heritage is real, because it is the sum and substance of our social expression, reaching into the distant past, influencing our lives today, pre-shaping the lives of the children of tomorrow, the Government convened a Cultural Heritage Conference in June of 1972. Representatives of over fifty ethno-cultural groups attended and their concerns, hopes and aspirations were brought forward and discussed.

Some people live under the impression that diversity of language and cultural expressions divide and weaken. The declared intent of our cultural heritage policy is that our diversity of cultural riches shall be a binding tie of unity and an increasing source of pride to our people.

The more specific objectives to which our Cultural Heritage policy is to be directed:

(1) To give Albertans increasing pride and identity as a people.

(2) To unite us in singular strength through understanding of our individual ethno-backgrounds; the sharing of our cultural diversity and richness, and appreciation of our evolving identity.

(3) To preserve the cultural wealth of our past: the rites, arts, music, etc. of our native peoples; the old-world contributions of our immigrant settlers; the songs, dances, social ways that each ethno-group brought by way of cultural dowry to this new land and which, in many cases, is becoming a common cultural mosaic, uniquely our own.

(4) To stimulate the living arts -- painting, dancing, music, handicrafts, the human drama -- precisely because of our diversity of heritage background, and thus help Alberta's writers, musicians, dramatists, dancers, etc. to national and international acceptance, appreciation and recognition.

At the previously mentioned Cultural Heritage Conference held in June, delegates passed many resolutions that would, in their implementation, affect many departments of Government. Among those high on the priority list of the delegates to the Cultural Heritage Conference were the following:

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(1) The establishment of a Cultural Heritage Council representative of all ethno-cultural groups in Alberta. This Council would consider and recommend programs for the development and preservation of our Cultural Heritage in Alberta.

(2) The publication of a Cultural Heritage periodical to provide a medium for the exchange of information among the various ethno-cultural communities in Alberta and the government. It is proposed that, initially, this publication would be a bi-monthly magazine, drawing the attention of Albertans generally to the color, drama and richness of the cultural past, and providing a vehicle of communication among the various cultural groups of the province.

(3) The establishment of an office within the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation to co-ordinate the development of ethno-cultural programs in Alberta.

The Government of Alberta has accepted these priority resolutions and declares them to be in effect as of this date.

It should be emphasized that this declaration of the government's position in regard to its cultural heritage is, in keeping with the human freedom of its peoples, a fluid and free policy -- a springboard for natural development of the cultural richness of our people.

The overall aim of this new cultural heritage policy is to preserve that part of our cultural past worthy of preserving, enrich our cultural present, and enhance Alberta's cultural tomorrow.

November, 1972.

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